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Age and sex structure: Canada, provinces and territories, 2010

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Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada

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.. not available for a specific reference period

... not applicable

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded

^{p} preliminary

^{r} revised

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

^{E} use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

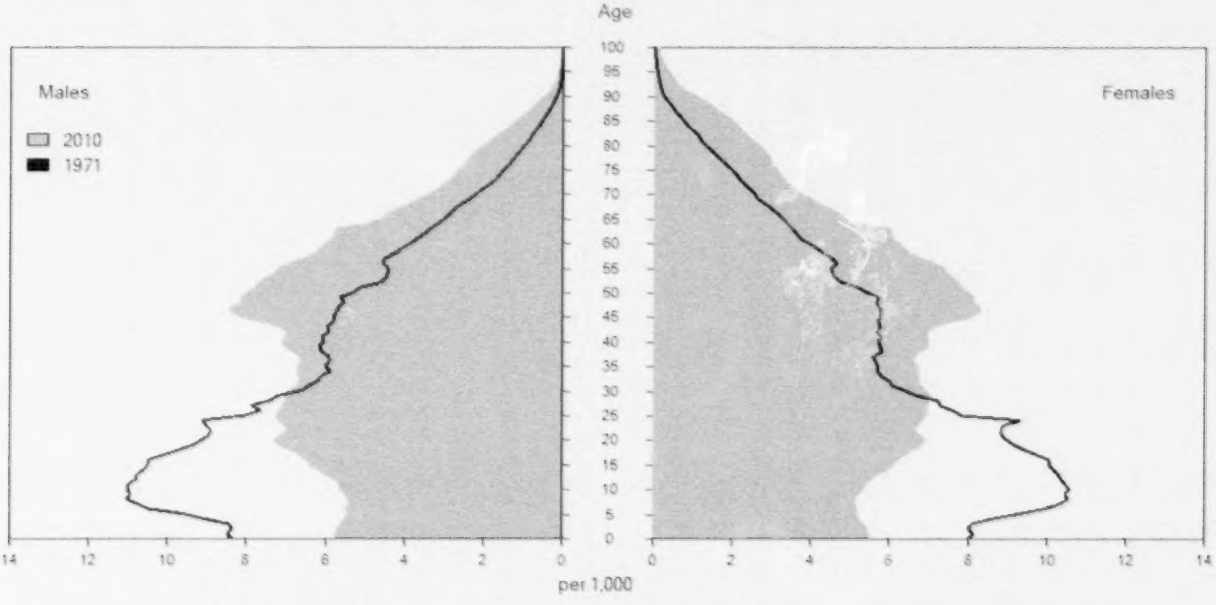
Age and sex structure: Canada, provinces and territories, 2010

This section examines the age and sex structure of the population of Canada, the provinces and territories, including the share of the population in different age groups, particularly seniors aged 65 years and over and children aged 14 years and under, as well as the median age—the age at which half the population is older and half is younger.

A population pyramid provides a visual snapshot of the age and sex structure of a population. The population pyramid for Canada as of July 1, 2010 shows the large cohort of baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1965, currently in the 45 to 64 year age range (Figure 1). The progression of the baby boomers through the age structure is particularly evident when comparing the July 1, 2010 pyramid to that of July 1, 1971. Nearly 40 years earlier, the baby boomers were children and young adults aged approximately 6 to 25 years. This large cohort will continue to shift upward and will eventually age out of the population pyramid, leaving, at the end, a more rectangular-shaped age structure.

A comparison of the July 1, 2010 and July 1, 1971 pyramids also clearly shows the impact of low fertility at the base of the pyramid and increasing life expectancy at the oldest ages. Also apparent from the age pyramid is the increase in the population at the youngest ages, roughly 0 to 2 years of age on July 1, 2010. In recent years there has been a growing population of women in their prime childbearing years of twenties to early thirties as well as an increase in the total fertility rate. Consequently, more babies are being born and the base of the pyramid has become broader.

Figure 1
Age pyramid of the Canadian population as of July 1, 1971 and 2010



Notes: 1971 (final intercensal estimates).
2010 (preliminary postcensal estimates).

Source: Statistics Canada. 2010. *Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-215-X.

The aging of the Canadian population can be measured using indicators of median age as well as the proportion of the population which is aged 65 years and over. These are the most widely used indicators of aging and allow for international comparisons. The proportion of children aged 14 years and under in the population can also provide an indication of the aging of the population to the extent that as older age groups assume larger shares in the population, proportions of children may be lower.

The median age of the Canadian population on July 1, 2010 was 39.7 years, an increase of 0.2 years compared to one year earlier. In 1971, the beginning of the period covered by the current record-keeping system, the median age was 26.2 years. The rise in the median age is the result of below replacement fertility rates for the last several decades, combined with an increasing life expectancy and the aging of the large baby boom cohort. According to the medium growth scenario of the most recent demographic projections, the median age could reach 44.0 years by 2040.

The senior population continues to grow

As of July 1, 2010, 4,819,600 seniors aged 65 years and over accounted for 14.1% of the Canadian population, up from 13.9% one year earlier. In 1971, 8.0% of the population were seniors and there has been a steady increase during the last forty years. Population aging in Canada is expected to accelerate between 2011 and 2031, as all people in the large cohort of baby boomers reach their senior years. Projections show that seniors could account for more than one-fifth of the population as soon as 2026 and could exceed one-quarter of the population by 2056.

Compared with 2008 to 2010 data from some other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the proportion of Canadian seniors remained below levels in Japan (22.7%), Germany (20.4%), France (16.6%) and the United Kingdom (16.1%), but slightly higher than Australia (13.3%) and the United States (12.9%). Given the sizeable demographic weight of the baby boom cohort in Canada, the share of the senior population in this country could surpass that of some other nations in the coming years.

As of July 1, 2010, there were 1,333,800 people aged 80 years and over in Canada, representing 3.9% of the total population. The number of people aged 80 years and over could double by the year 2031 and by 2061—the end of the projection period of the most recent projections—there could be 5.1 million people in this age range. The nation also had an estimated 6,500 people aged 100 years and over on July 1, 2010, the fastest growing age group during the 2009/2010 period (Figure 2). In 2001, they numbered 3,400. It is projected that there could be 17,600 centenarians by 2031 and 78,300 centenarians by 2061.

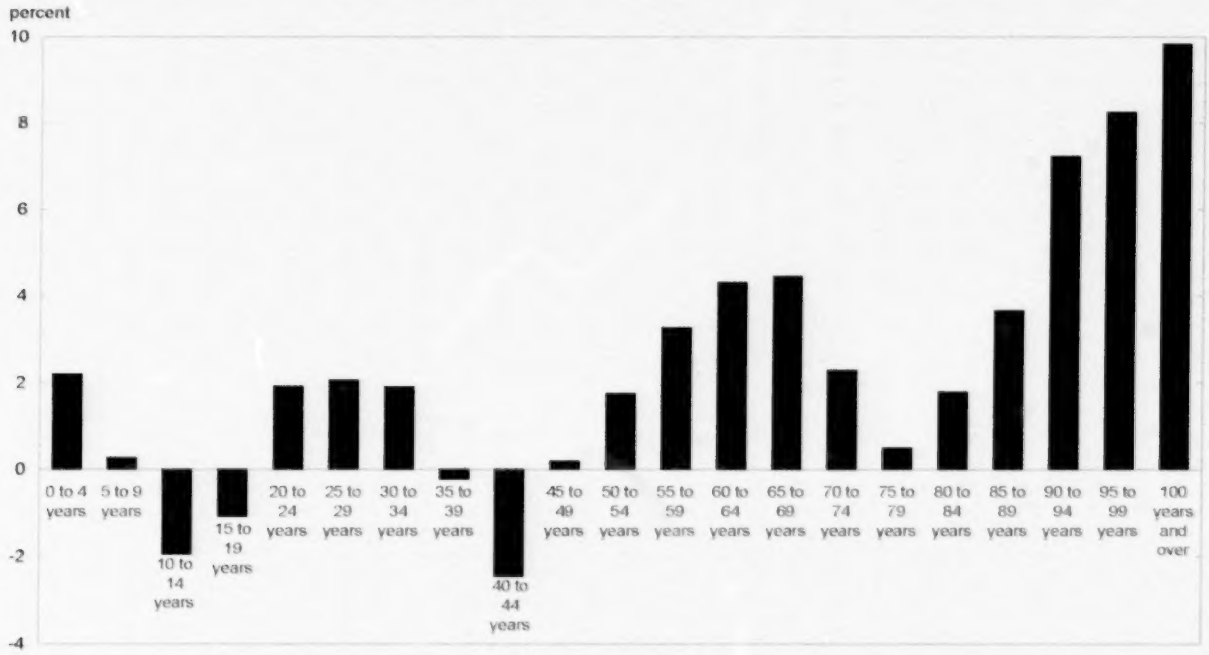
There were roughly equal proportions of men and women in each age group under 65 years; however the disparity grows throughout the senior years. For the total population 65 years and over, 55.6% were women on July 1, 2010, increasing to 63.0% for those aged 80 years and over and to 79.6% for centenarians. Much of this sex difference is due to a higher life expectancy for women compared to men. In recent years, however, gains in life expectancy have been more rapid for men than for women, resulting in a narrowing of the gap between the sexes.

Population of older working-age increases

As of July 1, 2010, the working-age population aged 15 to 64 years accounted for 69.4% of the total Canadian population. Although there has been some fluctuation over the years, this proportion is higher than it was in 1971 (62.7%). Despite a larger share compared to several decades ago, this age group has also grown older. Specifically the proportion of 55 to 64 year olds in the working-age population has increased, particularly during the last decade, while the share of 15 to 24 year olds has decreased. As of July 1, 2010, 55 to 64 year olds accounted for 18.0% of Canada's working-age population, up from a range of 12.5% to 13.3% throughout the 1970s to 1990s. In contrast, the youngest group of the working-age population, 15 to 24 year olds, has decreased fairly steadily from 30.1% in 1971 to 19.4% in 2010.

The ratio of 15 to 24 year olds to 55 to 64 year olds was 1.1 on July 1, 2010, meaning that for every person at the age of leaving the labour force, there would be just over one person at the age of labour force entry. In 1971 this ratio was 2.4. As a result of the baby boom cohort leaving the labour force and entering their senior years in the near future, as well as the subsequent smaller cohort, the share of the working-age population in the total population is expected to decrease in the coming years. It is projected that the ratio of the younger working-age population to the older working-age population would be less than one by 2015.

Figure 2
Percentage growth of population by age group, Canada, 2009/2010



Notes: 2009 (updated postcensal estimates).
2010 (preliminary postcensal estimates).
Source: Statistics Canada. 2010. *Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-215-X.

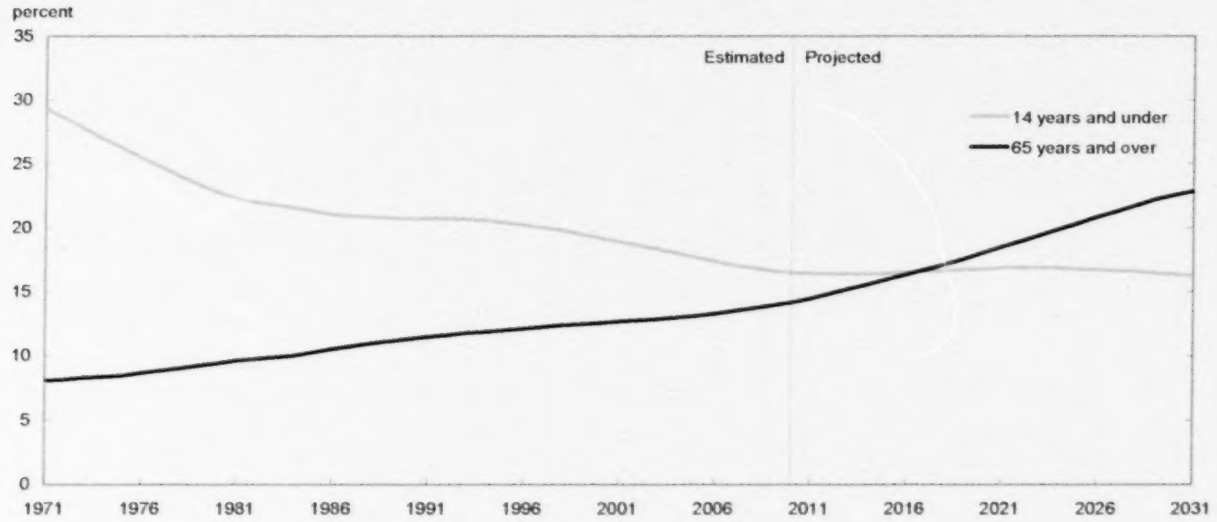
Share of children decreases

While the proportions of the senior population and the population approaching their senior years have been growing over time, the share of the population who are children has been steadily decreasing. As of July 1, 2010, there were 5,616,700 children aged 14 years and under, accounting for 16.5% of the population, down from 16.6% the previous year. In 1971, close to three in ten persons in the population were children in this age group (29.3%). It is projected that the proportion of children aged 14 years and under would be surpassed by the proportion of people aged 65 years and over for the first time between 2015 and 2021 (Figure 3).

Provincial and territorial variation

There was a fair amount of consistency among the aging indicators across the country, that is, provinces and territories with a median age that was higher than Canada overall generally also had a proportion of seniors aged 65 years and over that was above the national figure as well as a lower proportion of children aged 14 years and under. This was the case for all four of the Atlantic provinces, Quebec and British Columbia. In contrast, all three territories, Ontario and the western provinces of Alberta and Manitoba had a median age and a proportion of seniors that were lower than the Canadian population overall and a higher proportion of children reflecting younger populations in these provinces and territories. Only in Saskatchewan was there an apparent incoherence with a median age that was lower than the overall Canadian median age and a proportion of children that was higher than the national figure, both pointing to a young population, yet the proportion of seniors in this province was higher than the country as a whole.

Figure 3
Proportion of persons aged 65 years and over and children aged 14 years and under, Canada, 1971 to 2031



Notes: 1971 to 2005 (final intercensal estimates).
2006 to 2007 (final postcensal estimates).
2008 to 2009 (updated postcensal estimates).
2010 (preliminary postcensal estimates).
2011 to 2031 (population projections, medium-growth - historical trends (1981 to 2008) scenario).

Sources: Statistics Canada. 2010. *Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-215-X and Statistics Canada. 2010. *Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories 2009 to 2036*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-520-X.

At 43.3 years, Newfoundland and Labrador had the oldest population on July 1, 2010 when considering median age, which according to population projections (medium-growth scenario), the nation overall would not reach until 2034. The median ages in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island on July 1, 2010 were 42.8 years, 42.7 years and 42.1 years, respectively, also much higher than the rest of the country. In terms of the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over, the ranking is different with Nova Scotia having the oldest population (16.0%). Newfoundland and Labrador, along with Nova Scotia, also had the lowest proportion of children in the country (14.8% each). With the exception of Prince Edward Island, in the other three Atlantic provinces, the proportion of seniors surpassed the proportion of children, something not projected to happen at the national level for approximately five to ten years. This higher share of seniors compared to children was most pronounced in Nova Scotia. The pattern of aging in the Atlantic provinces is mostly the result of an evolution over the past century during which above average fertility rates were replaced with some of the lowest fertility rates in Canada, as well as, until recently, out-migration of young adults.

Population aging was evident across almost the entire country even in the areas with relatively young populations. As of July 1, 2010, Canada's youngest population was in Nunavut, where the median age was 24.6 years although it had increased by 0.4 years from the same date in 2009. In Nunavut, children aged 14 years and under represented more than three out of ten people in the population (31.5%), close to double the national proportion (16.5%). The territories had the lowest percentage of seniors in Canada, particularly Nunavut where only 3.0% of the population was aged 65 years and over. The Northwest Territories also had a young population with a median age of 31.5 years, a high share of children (21.8%) and a low proportion of seniors (5.4%). Of the three territories, Yukon had the oldest population, but still well below the national figures. The median age in Yukon was 38.9 years, the share of children in the population was 17.2% and the share of seniors was 8.4%. The territories, particularly Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, are characterized by high fertility and the lowest life expectancy in the country.

Among the provinces, Alberta had the youngest population, with a median age of 35.8 years, the lowest proportion of seniors aged 65 years and over (10.6%), and a higher share of children (18.3%) than Canada as a whole (16.5%). The demographic situation in Alberta can be attributed to positive net interprovincial migration from 1995/1996 to 2008/2009 combined with fertility that was higher than the national average.

Only in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, did the median age decrease to 37.7 years (down 0.1 year from July 1, 2009) and 37.5 years (down 0.2 years), respectively. This recent decrease is the combination of several demographic components, including higher numbers of international migrants than in previous years and higher fertility in these provinces, as well as positive net interprovincial migration in Saskatchewan and fewer losses in Manitoba. In addition, both interprovincial and international migrants, who have a lower median age than the overall population, and any births resulting from these migrants, would have a combined effect of lowering the median age. According to the most recent population projections (medium-growth scenario), the population in these provinces are expected to continue to age; therefore, it is likely that the slight decreases in median age are annual fluctuations rather than new long term trends.

On July 1, 2010, the proportion of children aged 14 years and under was 18.8% in Manitoba and 18.9% in Saskatchewan, both higher than that of the Canadian population (16.5%). In contrast, while the proportion of seniors aged 65 years and over in Manitoba (13.8%) was below the national share (14.1%), it was above the national proportion in Saskatchewan (14.6%). The unique demographic situation in Saskatchewan is the result of fertility higher than in the rest of the country, higher life expectancy historically up to the early 1990s, and, until the last several years, relatively high out-migration of young adults.

The two most populous, as well as neighbouring, provinces, Quebec and Ontario had differing age structures with Quebec's population older than that of Canada as a whole while the population in Ontario was younger. In Quebec, the median age as of July 1, 2010 was 41.2 years and, in Ontario, it was 39.4 years. Quebec had a proportion of seniors (15.3%) that was above that in Ontario (13.9%) and a lower proportion of children aged 14 years and under (15.6% and 16.7%, respectively). The younger population in Ontario may be at least partially related to the presence of more immigrants who generally have a younger age structure, as well as any births resulting from these immigrants. Quebec, in contrast, has experienced a higher life expectancy than the national average over the past several decades and, until fairly recently, had lower levels of fertility than the nation overall, factors which contribute to an aging population.

Lower fertility and the highest life expectancy in the country are factors explaining why British Columbia had an older population than for Canada overall. On July 1, 2010, the median age in British Columbia was 40.8 years; the share of seniors aged 65 years and over was 15.0% and the proportion of children aged 14 years and under was 15.1%.